

PRATHAM BOOKS
A Book in Every Child's Hand

The Boy and the Drum

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Level 3

This play is based on a modern form of theatre called Body Theatre. The beauty of this form is that it can be done impromptu, at any place, with as many or as few actors as convenient, with or without props. You will find suggestions on how to perform this play at the end of the book.

And now the play!

The Boy and the Drum

Narrator/s (stepping out to one corner of the stage): A poor woman had a son. She worked hard as a gardener in wealthy houses in their town. They gave her some grain in return.

One child mimes the mother, while other children form groups of the well-to-do families. The mother goes to each group and mimes gardening for these groups. Having created this 30-second scene, all the groups, including the mother freeze in their positions.

Narrator: But she felt bad because she could never afford to buy nice clothes or lovely toys for her son.

A young boy comes running through the chorus, singing a song and playing mime cricket. He freezes with a pose at the centre of the stage.

Narrator: The little lad was bright and cheerful. Not having any toys or nice clothes did not bother him. After a hard day's work, the mother was going to the market to sell the grain she had received.

The mother steps towards the boy and the rest of the frozen actors go back to the chorus.

Narrator: She asked her son:
Mother: What can I get for you from the market, little one?



Narrator: Now the boy was fascinated with the sound of a drum. So he said:
Boy: A drum, mother, I would love to have a drum to play with.

During the following narration, the boy continues to be frozen in his position while the mother circles the stage. She meets one actor who steps out of the chorus as the merchant to whom she sells the grain, another from whom she buys flour, and on the way she picks up a piece of wood, and goes back to the boy.

Narrator: The mother knew she would never have enough money to buy a drum for her son. She went to the market, sold her grain and bought some gram flour and some salt. While returning home, she felt sad that she would have to face him empty-handed. So when she saw a nice piece of wood on the road, she picked it up and brought it home.

The son did not know what to do with the piece of wood. Yet he happily carried it with him when he went out to play. A happy song sprang to his lips and he went along singing it:

Boy moves around the stage while chorus watches him.

Boy: Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot
Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot!
I asked for a drum and look what I got,
A lovely piece of wood!
I asked for a drum and look what I got,
I think my luck is good!
Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot
Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot!



Towards the end of the song, an old man emerges from the chorus. He mimes trying to light his stove. As he coughs, the entire chorus coughs, thus amplifying the effect of his condition.

Narrator: And as he went skipping along on his way, he came across an old man. The old man was trying to light his stove using some cow-dung cakes. The fire was not catching and there was smoke all around. The smoke made the man's eyes water and he was coughing. The little boy ran up to him and said:

Boy: What is the matter Grandpa? Can I help you in any way?

Old Man: Ah! Little one, I am trying to cook some food, but I am unable to start a fire.



For you see,
My fire will just not start
I need to cook. Oh! Take a look
My fire will never start! Can somebody start this fire?
My eyes are red, my arms are tired.
I need to eat, I need some food.
Oh! For a dry piece of wood!

Boy: Here, Grandpa, you can use my piece of wood to start your fire.

The following actions are mimed as the narrator speaks.

Narrator: The old man was very pleased. He lit his fire, made some bread and gave a piece to the boy.

The old man steps back into the chorus.

The boy skipped along singing his song:

Boy: La-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- LaLa-la-la-la-
La-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- La!
My piece of wood got me some food.
A lovely piece of bread.
My piece of wood is not a drum, but it
Got me bread.
A lovely piece of bread.
La-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- LaLa-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- La-la-la-la- La!

Narrator: The boy walked on till he came upon a potter's wife. She had her baby in her arms. The baby was wailing and flailing her arms.

As before, the potter's wife emerges from the chorus, as if with a baby in her arms. While the mother tries to pacify the baby, the chorus hums a lullaby softly. This lullaby can be a regional song.

The boy said:
Boy: Dear lady, why is your daughter crying?

Potter’s Wife: My little one is hungry. She has not had anything to eat since morning. I cannot give her anything as there is nothing in the house. I wish I had some bread to give her.

Narrator: The kind hearted boy gave the lady his bread. She gave the bread to her child who ate it eagerly and stopped crying. She was so pleased with the boy that she gave him a large pot.

The above actions are mimed as the narrator voices the lines. After the action, the woman with the baby goes back to the chorus while the boy continues, carrying his pot.

The boy went along humming his funny song:

Boy: Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot
Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot!
I gave my bread away and
Look what I got!
I gave my bread away and
Got a lovely pot!
Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot
Tum-ti-tee Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee-Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee- Tum-ti-tee Tot!

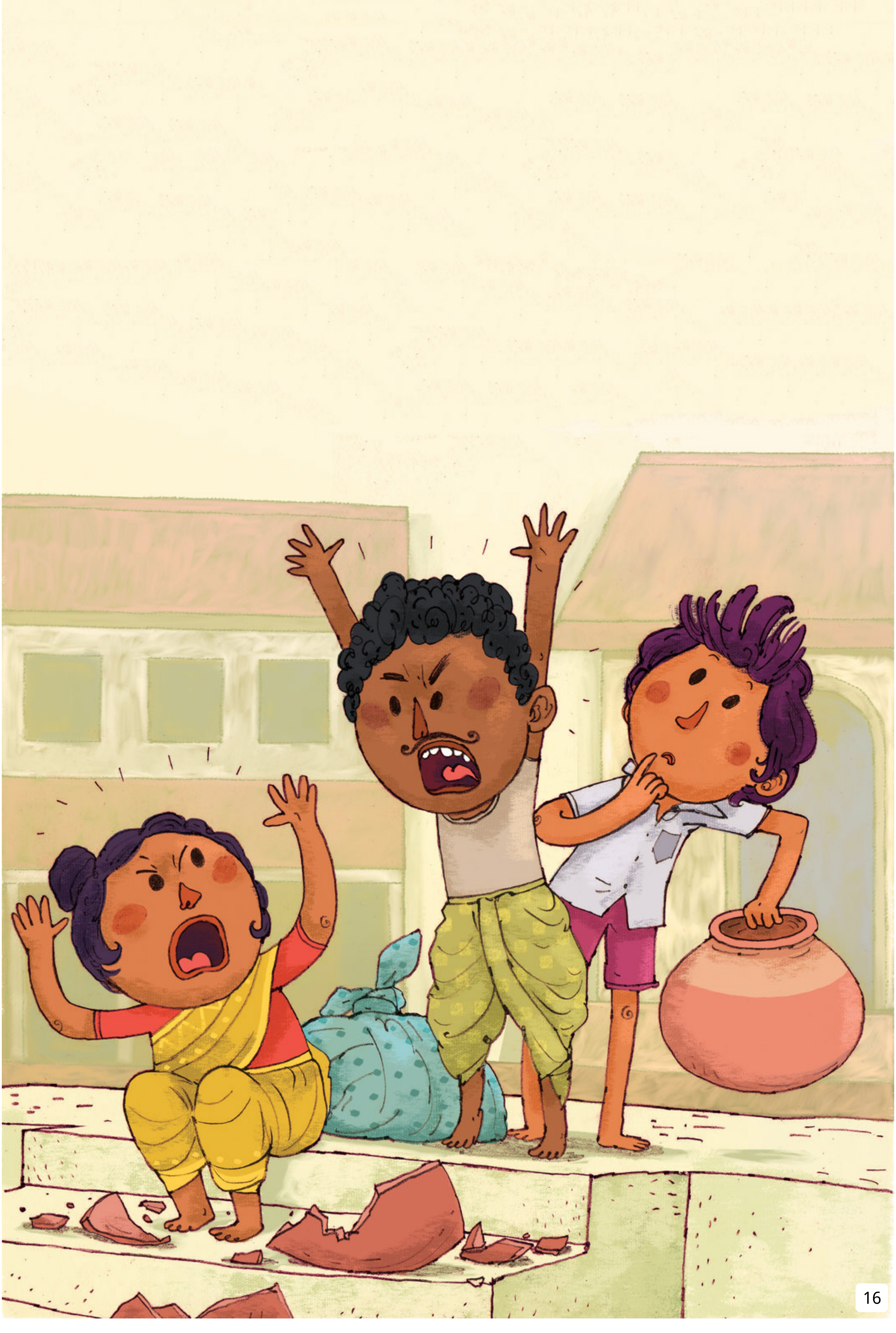


Narrator: The little boy skipped along until he came upon a strange scene at the river bank.

The chorus can move their hands all together, symbolizing the flowing river. The washerman and his wife emerge from the chorus, arguing in mime. Their actions are exaggerated but their voices are not heard.

A washerman was quarreling loudly with his wife.
The boy stopped and asked:
Boy: Dear Sir, what is the matter? Why are you quarreling with your wife?
Narrator: The washerman said:

Washerman: You see, son, it was like this,
I gave her a pot, I gave her a pot.
And what did she do?
I gave her a pot, it cost a lot.
She went and broke it too!



She broke the pot, the last of my lot,
And now I feel so sore!
I gave her the pot, the pot she broke.
The pot I need to boil my clothes.
Without the pot, my clothes will rot.
Oh, they will remain soiled!
So you see, I have nothing to boil my clothes in before I wash them. And because of her, my trade will suffer.

Boy: Dear Sir, don't quarrel with your wife. Please take this pot of mine and use it.

Narrator: The washerman was very happy with the pot. He was so pleased with the boy's good nature that he gave him a nice coat in return.
The entire chorus praises the coat, 'Wah, what a nice coat! Look at the colour! Seems very cozy! So soft and warm!' The washerman and his wife make their way back to the chorus.



The boy ran along singing his funny song.

Boy: As I walked along,
With my pot in hand, I met a washerman. Who gave me this coat so grand!
Oh so funny indeed!
People looking for things,
And I have what they need!

Narrator: The boy walked on, all the while admiring his grand coat. He soon came to a bridge, and there he was alarmed by what he saw.

For the following narration, the chorus makes the sound of a cold wind blowing. A man emerges from the chorus, shivering. He sits down, curled into a ball.

A man was shivering in the cold and he was not even wearing a shirt. He seemed to be hurt and was moaning in pain. The boy was very concerned and ran up to the man and said:

Boy: You seem to be bleeding,
You seem to be hurt! I'll try and get you some help.
You also need a coat.

Narrator: The boy asked the man how he came to be in such a sorry state.

The man said:
During the following lines, the action is mimed. A group of actors emerges. They chase another actor (playing the man), corner him, and rob him.

Man: I was riding my horse in a hurry.
I was riding my horse to the city.



A crowd of thieves, they came and GOT me! They got me down, they got me out.
They took my purse, got all my money.
I tried to put up a good fight.
But they beat me up, they beat me bad.
They left me in pain, they left me hurt.
They took it all, even my shirt!

As the song ends the acting-robber group goes back to the chorus.

Narrator: The boy said:
Boy: Your need is greater than mine. Please take this coat. It will help you keep warm.

Narrator: The man was touched by the little lad's kindness. He thanked the boy profusely and presented him with the big fine horse he was riding.

The robbed man goes into the chorus, while the entire chorus mimes the riding of the horse with the sounds. A drum can accompany the rhythm. The chorus mimes the riding on the spot, while the boy rides his horse across the stage.

The boy was very happy and led the horse along, singing his song.
Boy: Oh so funny indeed!
People looking for things,
And I have what they need!
A man needs a shirt,
But all he has is a big fine horse!
I gave him my coat, what did I get?
His big fine horse, of course!

The "horsing" of both the boy and chorus stops. Another group emerges from the chorus. These include the bridegroom, his relatives, and the drummers of the party.



Narrator: As he was walking along with his horse, he came upon a large party of gaily dressed people. They were part of a big wedding party with the bridegroom, and musicians. They seemed ready to go in a wedding procession, but all of them were sitting under a tree with long faces.

At this point, both the groom's party and the remaining chorus actors sing a popular wedding song, but in a slow and sad-sounding manner.

The boy stopped and asked them what made them look so depressed. The groom's father said:

Groom's father: You see, son, it's like this. We are all set to go in the wedding procession.

But we need a horse for the groom. The man who was supposed to bring it hasn’t turned up, the auspicious hour is almost gone.

Narrator: And the groom himself stepped up to the boy and said:

Groom: I am the groom.
Waiting to see my bride,
But I’m stuck in here Just hoping for a ride!
I just can’t go there on my feet.
My horse is late and so is the hour.
My guests are all waiting to eat.
I’ll miss my wedding for sure!
So you see, what I need right now is a horse! I need a horse! A really quick horse!

Chorus: He needs a horse, he needs a horse! He needs a really fast horse!



Narrator: And so the boy, being helpful as ever, offered his horse to the groom. The groom was very happy and he asked the boy what he could give him in exchange for his horse.

The boy looked around among the musicians and quickly spotted the drummer.

He said:
Boy: A stitch in time they say saves nine. And what indeed did save the day, Was this splendid horse of mine!
All I want from you is
That fine little drum that you play!
Oh, make my dreams come true!
Please make my dream come true!

The drummer steps forward with his drum, and hands it over to the boy during the following lines.



Narrator: The groom requested the drummer to hand over the drum to the boy. The drummer knew he would easily get enough money to buy himself a brand new drum. He willingly gave his drum away.

The groom's actors and everyone else return to the main body of the chorus. All sing the wedding song, but now it is happy and up-tempo.

Narrator: The boy rushed home singing his song and playing his new drum. He could not wait to tell his mother how she had helped him to get his drum.

The boy and the mother meet at the centre of the stage.

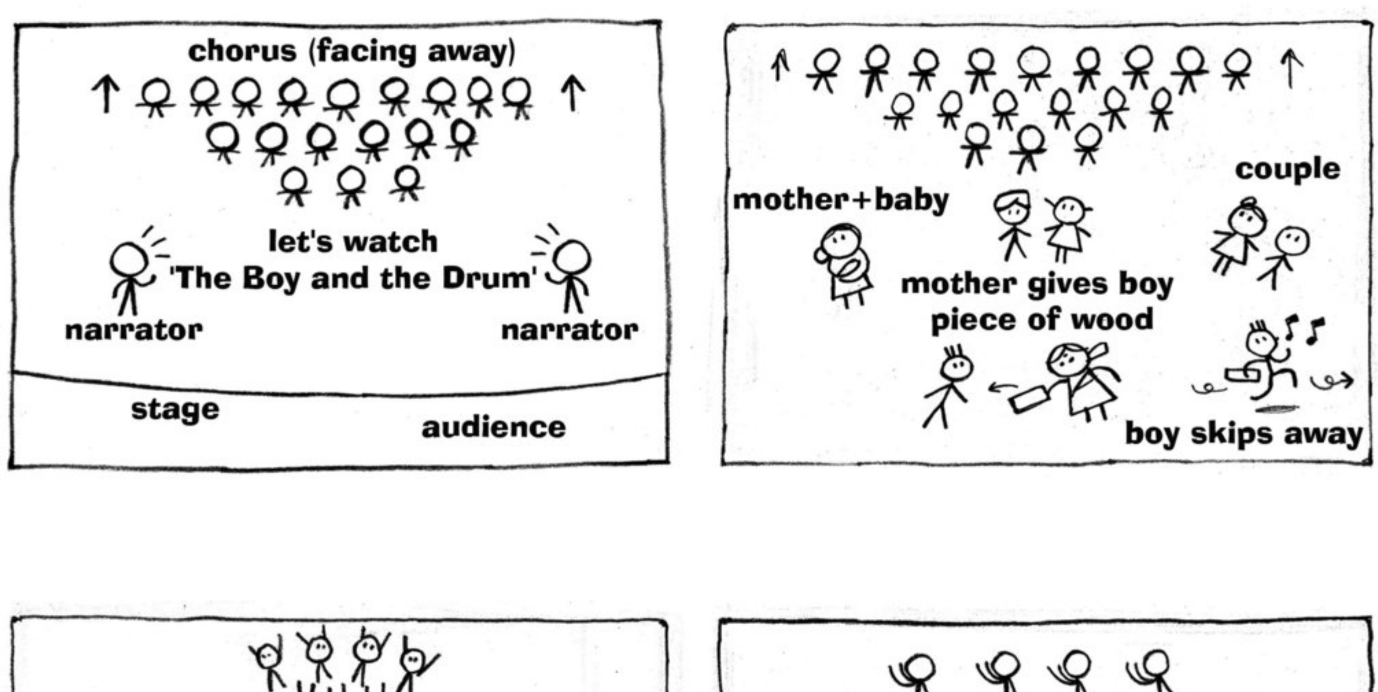
Boy: My piece of wood did a lot of good!
It got me bread as food.
My piece of bread lasted not,
But gave me a lovely pot.
My pot got me a lovely coat.
The coat did help a needy man.
I got me a big fine horse to ride.
With that horse, I got a groom his bride!
So you see it is simple indeed
A little bit of give and take,
Will a lot of people happy make!
So when you meet your friends today,
Try and make their day!

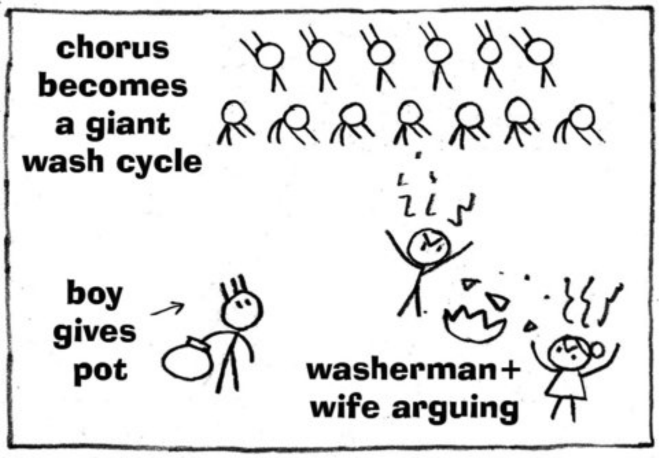
The last verse is sung again by the entire chorus, which sings and dances around the boy. In the end, the actors all freeze in the positions of the various characters in the play.

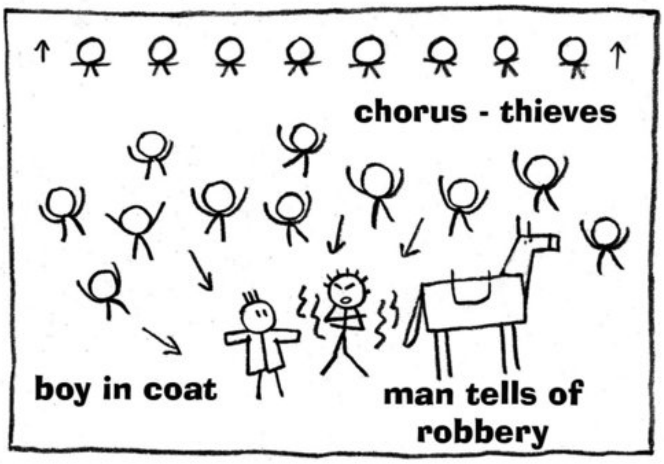
----------- Curtain -----------

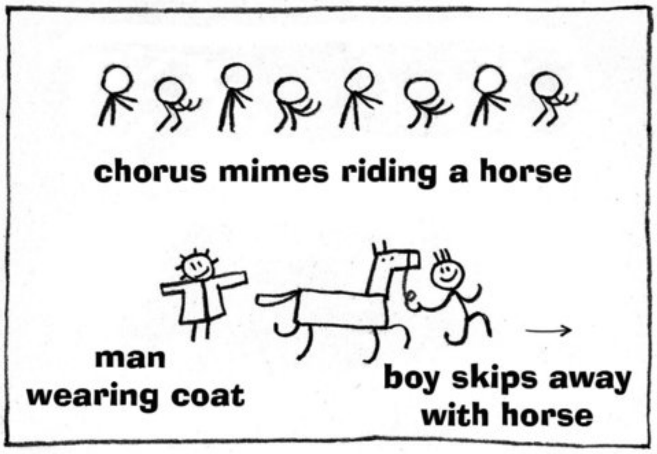
Stage setting:

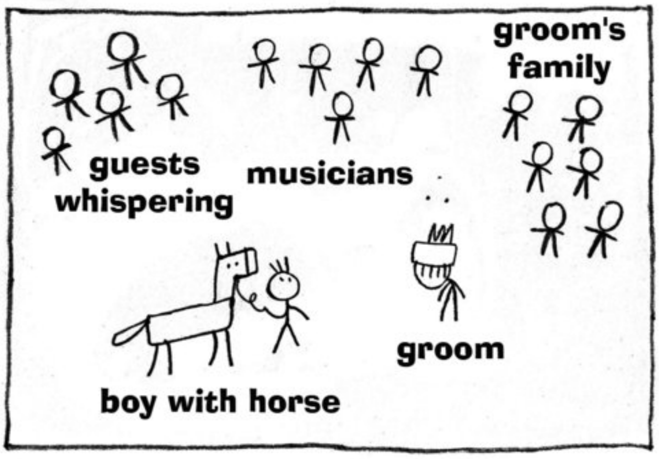
The boxes below suggest a possible design for the play. Think of each of these boxes as a photograph of a particular scene. You could have the props, costumes, and musical instruments for the play on a bench placed against the back wall, and you could make use of them during the changing of the scenes behind the chorus.



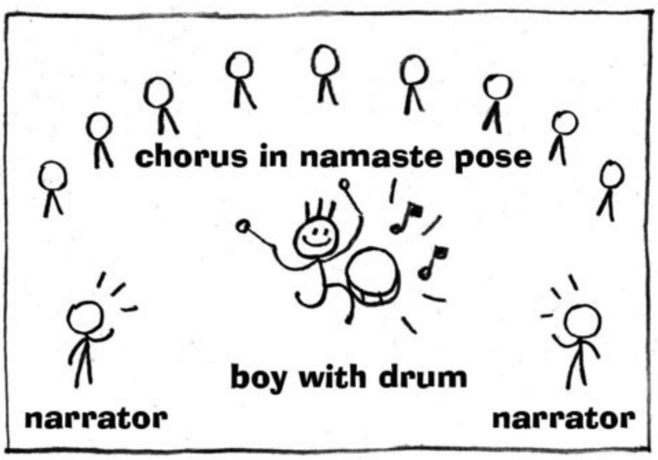

chorus
becomes
a giant
wash cycle
boy
gives
pot
washerman+
wife arguing


chorus - thieves
boy in coat
man tells of
robbery


chorus mimes riding a horse
man
wearing coat
boy skips away
with horse


groom's
family
guests
whispering
musicians
groom
boy with horse


everyone dancing
groom with horse
boy with drum


chorus in namaste pose
boy with drum
narrator
narrator

Suggestions for the cast
The play can be performed by a cast of six to thirty children. With more children, the role of the narrator and the boy can be assumed by many children, besides the other characters. For a cast of four to six children, the roles of the boy and the mother can be fixed, while the other children can take on the various other roles in the play. The stage directions given in the play are only meant as a suggestion or possibility. Please adapt the play to suit your needs in terms of availability of space (stage, classroom, hall etc.), props, sets and costumes.

Possible costumes: Regular comfortable clothes like t-shirts and pants or salwar and kameez, OR school uniform.

Possible props: Drum, stick, pot, dupattas, depending on availability. The entire play can also be done without any props, all of which can be mimed.

Simple musical instruments:

Simple musical instruments can be used or the chorus itself can make the appropriate sounds.
Suggested stage directions for a group of about 20 to 30 children.

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All the children are facing away from the audience in three equal lines. A couple of narrators come in a very dramatic fashion. For example, the two of them can be playing a game of catch and suddenly they look at the audience, welcome them, and speak a little about the play together as a chorus: "The story of the boy and the drum, a story about sharing, a story about values, a story about people and not things."

The whole group turns to the audience and shouts out the title as one big chorus. The group stays in the three lines, now facing the audience.

From now on, the characters will step out of the chorus to the stage space in front and then back into the chorus when they are done with their part in the play.

The mother can wear a colored dupatta, which she gives to the boy when she gives him the piece of wood. All the other characters can also wear dupattas, which they exchange with the boy at the appropriate time. This action can symbolize sharing and giving, although this is not essential to the play's action.

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The Boy and the Drum
(English)

A folktale about giving and kindness transforms into a lively play! This versatile and adaptable piece can be performed on stage or in the classroom. Hours of fun and learning guaranteed!

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.